

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ENGLISH LEARNER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ELAC)

The California State Board of Education hereby establishes an English Learner Advisory Committee.

Purpose: To receive information, guidance, and advice from highly skilled educators who have operated exceptionally successful educational programs for English learners.

Background: The Laws of California and the policies of the administration and the State Board of Education require that each student:

- Has access to the same high quality core curriculum.
- Is tested to determine his or her academic progress and the progress of his or her school.
- Pass the same high level exit examination to receive a high school diploma.

Some 1.4 million of California's 5.8 million K-12 students have been identified as English learners. For these students, the task of meeting such high levels of achievement may well require more time, more academic and financial focus, and specifically directed curricular activities.

The Reading/Language Arts Framework and the criteria for adoption of K-8 Reading/Language Arts instructional materials, provide substantial attention to the achievement of state standards for English learners as well as other students. State and federal laws, budgets, and policies provide for additional funds, time, and services for English learners.

State law requires that English learners (in addition to all other testing requirements) be tested to determine their degree of English language fluency and to track their progress towards proficiency in English. The State Board of Education has adopted, as called for in statute, English Language Development Standards. These Standards are to be used in the development of the assessment to track English language proficiency of English learners. This test is being developed this fiscal year 1999/2000.

Need for the Advisory Committee

In selection of the Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission, the State Board of Education has endeavored to ensure that educators with experience in successful educational programs for English learners are represented. Indeed, the Board appointees have direct successful teaching experience with English learner students. However, the Board believes that there is a wide variety of state and federal policies, fund sources, and activities that could be better focused to meet the needs of English learners. Further, there is a great need for high quality data describing the various educational circumstances of English learners. Thus, the Board seeks the advice (on an informal basis) of a group of educators who have demonstrated knowledge regarding the educational needs of such students to review a host of policies, funding decisions, data sources, and to provide the Board with advice as to how to focus resources better towards the goal of improving educational services for the students.

Charge to the Committee

- Given the current state of our knowledge about English learners, whose primary language fluency and levels of academic achievement vary greatly, how can the State Board be most influential in helping these students to overcome language barriers quickly and to achieve academically at levels consistent with other students? How can the State Board work most effectively to improve the functioning of the whole of the education system- -county offices, districts, school sites - - to provide high quality educational services to these students?
- What does current data tell us about the academic achievement of students? Do we need more data? If so, what type?
- Is primary language support needed for some students and their parents at schools with English learners so as to improve communication with students and parents?
- Should the state encourage and/or fund local school districts to offer each student the opportunity to learn a language other than English in elementary school?
- How might we more clearly focus state and local funds on the academic achievement needs of English learners? This is especially critical for the use of the \$60 million for specified additional services for English learners provided in Governor Davis' budget for this current year.
- In addition to the basic materials adopted, should the state review supplemental instructional materials, which may be of specific assistance to specific language groups?

Time Required: It is anticipated that the ELAC would meet no more than three times per year for one-half day. They would review a large amount of information and provide the Board with their best collective judgement on improvements needed in services.

Membership: Each member of the State Board of Education will recommend one member. The president of the Board will appoint the chair. The full Board will vote to appoint members and to fill vacancies. Staff will be provided by the Board Office.

Term of Office: It is anticipated that the term will be for three years. Missing three meetings will result in being removed.

Compensation: Members of the Committee will serve without compensation, but normal travel costs of official meetings will be provided to members.